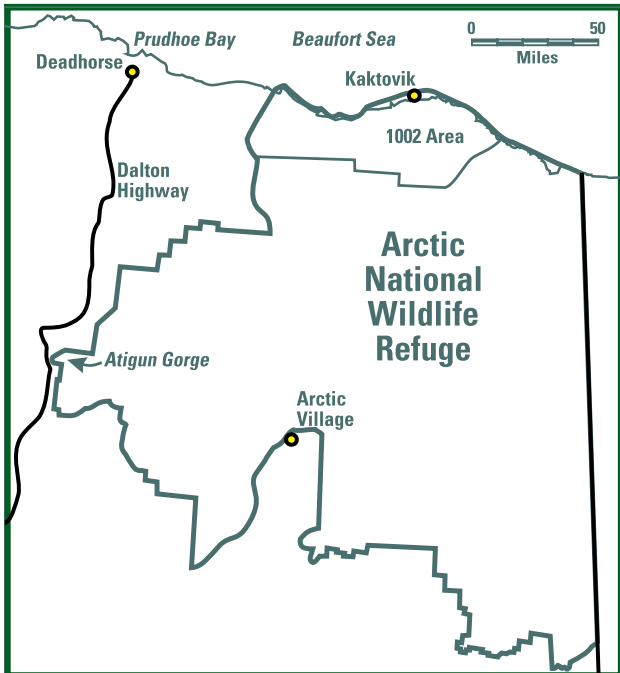




## U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

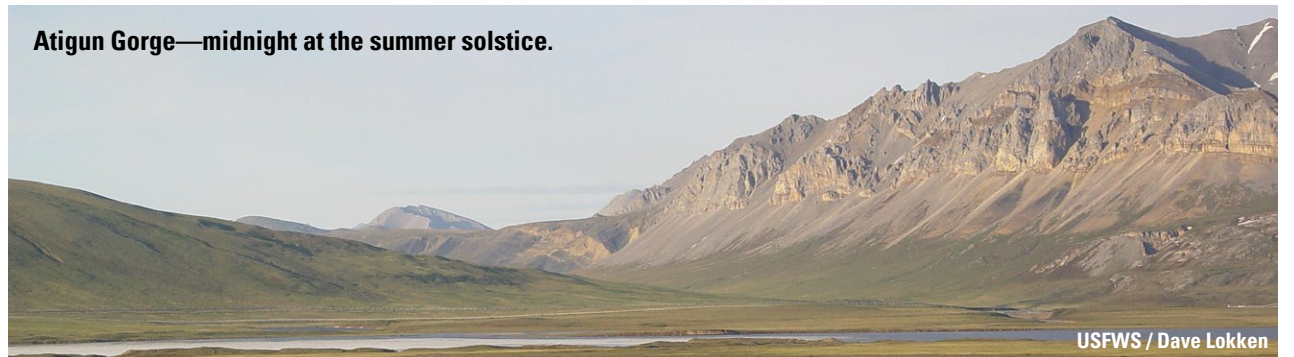
# Day Hiking in Atigun Gorge

*Practice restraint in this wild landscape*



Situated close to the Dalton Highway, Atigun Gorge is a popular destination within the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Although the Refuge is vast, this popular hiking area is fragile and easily impacted by human activities.

Be a steward of the land. Visit wisely and gently to preserve the gorge for future visitors and the wild creatures who make it their home.



Atigun Gorge—midnight at the summer solstice.

USFWS / Dave Lokken

## Atigun Gorge is special:

**Important for wildlife:** Have you ever wondered why the Arctic Refuge boundary jogs westward to include Atigun Gorge? Congress included Atigun Gorge within the Refuge because of the gorge's significant value to Dall sheep as a wintering range, lambing area, and source of mineral licks. The gorge is important to other wildlife, such as bears and caribou, as a travel corridor and feeding area. It also provides nesting habitat for birds.

**Significant for research:** Scientists conduct a variety of projects in Atigun Gorge. Study plots may be marked. Please leave the marked areas as you find them.

**Offers visitors an unusual opportunity:** What does it mean that the Arctic Refuge has no designated hiking trails? It means that visitors have the freedom to respond to the landscape as it unfolds before them, unlike in places where heavy human use forces managers to restrict visitors to designated trails. Hiking on trails may be recommended in other areas, but here it is worth the effort to seek your own route, which will disperse use and help heal emerging paths in Atigun Gorge.

**Vulnerable to human use:** Atigun Gorge receives concentrated visitation because it is one of the few locations within the Arctic Refuge that is easily accessible from the road system. In addition, the area's topography funnels use into the gorge. Thank you for caring for this area by following the guidelines at the right to limit your impact on the Refuge.

## Protect the land:

Reduce impacts to Atigun Gorge. Avoid causing physical changes to vegetation or rocky surfaces. Trails form quickly in the arctic, scarring the land. Healing, if it occurs at all, can take years.

- **Prevent the creation of trails and worn areas by dispersing use.** Don't step where others have stepped before. Choose shoes with low-tread soles. If you visit multiple times, alternate your destinations or explore new routes. Consider traveling in small groups (commercial guides limit group size to 7 hikers). Minimize damage to vegetation by resting on rock, gravel, sand or snow.
- **Leave no sign of your visit.** Please pack out your trash and any that you find; leave your route unmarked; and leave natural objects and items of antiquity for others to discover.
- **Deal properly with human waste.** Urinate at least 200 feet (about 70 paces) from flowing water. Carry human waste storage bags, such as "WAG BAGs," if you plan to pack out your solid waste; or bring a trowel to bury such waste at least 200 feet from flowing water. Pack out toilet paper.

## Respect wildlife:

National Wildlife Refuges are places where wildlife comes first. Wild creatures need a safe place to find food and raise their young. You are a visitor in their home.

- **Give wildlife the right-of-way and avoid those with young.** Animals may respond to repeated disturbance by abandoning their feeding areas, nesting sites, and even their young. If an animal alters its behavior because of your presence, you are too close. Use binoculars and telephoto lenses to observe and photograph wildlife.
- **In brushy areas, let bears know where you are.** Talk or sing so that animals are not startled by your presence.
- **Keep food and trash secure from bears and other animals.** Never leave food unattended. Bears that obtain human food may become aggressive toward visitors and may need to be destroyed. If you leave your daypack unattended, store food and trash in a bear-resistant container.

